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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: UKRAINE: KRAMER-WOOD 5/22 MEETING WITH FORMER
CHIEF OF STAFF OLEKSANDR ZINCHENKO

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) In a May 22 meeting with visiting EUR DAS David Kramer, OVP Deputy NSA Joseph Wood, and Ambassador, former State Secretary Oleksandr Zinchenko stressed that Ukraine's next prime minister should be a politically independent technocrat -- not a politician. Zinchenko had advised President Yushchenko's Our Ukraine (OU) to build bridges to the rival Party of Regions, the first-place finisher in the March 26 parliamentary elections; without Regions' support, President Yushchenko would not be able to govern effectively in the east and south. Zinchenko characterized OU as a "mess," asserting that "nobody in OU listens to Yushchenko." Ukraine's relations with Russia were in "total chaos," according to Zinchenko. The Russian mass media, at the behest of the Kremlin, was presenting the Russian public with an extremely negative image of Ukraine; Kiev's official reaction, championed by Foreign Minister Tarasyuk, had simply further antagonized Moscow. Zinchenko stressed that Yushchenko needed a respected, competent special envoy to patch up relations with Russia; Zinchenko said he would take such a job if he had Yushchenko's full support. In particular, Zinchenko said that he would smooth the rough edges of Ukraine's NATO accession effort, listening to Russian concerns and building Ukrainian public support for accession. Zinchenko complained about the Ukrainian government's failure to reach out to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to diversify energy supplies; the controversial January gas deal with Russia had been "a crime," Zinchenko said, adding that "somebody" had betrayed Ukraine "because he wanted to become a millionaire." Zinchenko claimed that Yushchenko still did not know all the details of the January deal -- or "does not want to know." End summary.

The Man Who Lit the Fuse

2. (C) EUR DAS David Kramer and Deputy National Security Adviser to the Vice President Joseph Wood, accompanied by Ambassador, met May 22 with former State Secretary Oleksandr Zinchenko, whose September 2005 public allegations of corruption against members of President Yushchenko's inner circle sparked the breakup of the original Orange coalition. Yushchenko answered Zinchenko's accusations by sacking Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko (who was not the subject of Zinchenko's corruption allegations) and removing anti-Tymoshenko close associates National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) Secretary Petro Poroshenko and senior presidential aide Oleksandr Tretyakov (who were in Zinchenko's sights). The moves sent Ukraine into a period of political limbo from which it has yet to fully emerge. (Note: The media reported on May 24 that Zinchenko may soon

be dismissed as leader of his Party of Patriotic Forces of Ukraine, which finished 30th -- with 0.10 percent of the total vote -- in the March 26 parliamentary and local elections.)

Next Prime Minister? Technocrat

¶3. (C) Addressing the current prolonged Rada majority coalition formation negotiations that have followed the March 26 parliamentary elections, Zinchenko said he could not answer the question of who would serve as the next prime minister. Zinchenko dismissed current Prime Minister Yuriy Yekhanurov as weak and characterized Tymoshenko as decisive and charismatic but unable to create a winning team. Zinchenko asserted that Yushchenko would be best served by choosing a compromise figure who was capable and politically independent; the country needed a strong, professional manager in the prime minister's chair -- not a politician.

Building Bridges With Regions

¶4. (C) Zinchenko said that the results of the March parliamentary and local elections made it clear that, while distasteful, Our Ukraine (OU) had to build bridges to the rival Party of Regions. Regions had won decisive political control in seven eastern and southern oblasts; unless Yushchenko reached out to Regions and included it in a "Grand Coalition," Yushchenko would not be able to govern these oblasts. Zinchenko speculated that the price of coaxing Regions into the proverbial Big Tent would be a deputy prime minister and a deputy Rada Speaker slot, as well as some key Rada committee chairmanships. Zinchenko had advised OU to work directly with Regions politicians at the local level,

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which he claimed would weaken and isolate Regions Chairman and Yushchenko rival Viktor Yanukovich.

OU: "A Mess"

¶5. (C) Zinchenko characterized OU as a "mess" of a political party over which Yushchenko now had little control. Asserting that "nobody in OU listens to Yushchenko," Zinchenko stressed that a housecleaning was needed; Yushchenko had to assert his authority by appointing three or four young leaders to unify the party, enforce discipline and turn it into the "dynamic force" that it once had been.

Relations With Russia: "Total Chaos"

¶6. (C) Ukraine's relations with Russia, according to Zinchenko, were in state of "total chaos." The message from the Kremlin, dutifully repeated by the Russian mass media, was that "everything is bad in Ukraine." This negative image of Ukraine was having a significant impact on trade relations, which Zinchenko asserted were in bad shape and getting worse. Zinchenko groused that the Ukrainian government's reaction to Moscow's hostility had been crude and counterproductive; Foreign Minister Tarasyuk, in particular, had done nothing but antagonize the Kremlin.

¶7. (C) Zinchenko argued that Yushchenko needed to reach out to Moscow. The best way to do that was to appoint a special representative to handle relations with Russia. That person needed to be a professional, and someone respected in Moscow. Responding to a question from DAS Kramer, Zinchenko said he would be willing to serve as Yushchenko's emissary to the Kremlin, but only if Yushchenko fully supported him in attempting to patch things up with Russia. Asked for an example of what he would do differently than Tarasyuk, Zinchenko cited Ukraine's NATO accession effort. Tarasyuk, he said, regularly and deliberately stoked the Kremlin's

already considerable anxiety about Ukraine joining NATO. Zinchenko said he would take a "professional" approach, listening to Russian concerns while at the same time using a PR campaign to build public support in Ukraine for accession, highlighting the fact that Russia itself had a robust relationship with the alliance.

Gas Deal

¶8. (C) Zinchenko also blamed Tarasyuk, and the Ukrainian government more broadly, for failing to reach out to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in an effort to diversify Ukraine's energy supplies. Instead, Zinchenko said, Ukraine had "voluntarily given Russia monopoly control" of its energy sector via the January gas deal, which Zinchenko characterized as "a crime." "Somebody" had betrayed Ukraine "simply because he wanted to become a millionaire," Zinchenko asserted, adding that Yushchenko still did not know the details of the January agreement -- "or does not want to know."

¶9. (U) The delegation cleared this cable.
Herbst